

Recycling Participation Study for the City of Cambridge

Instructions for Field Assistants

- 1) This study is different from most recycling participation studies in that we are trying to identify the “non-recyclers” rather than to figure out how many people are recycling. However, our starting point is the same: we have to go building by building to try to figure out how many households are recycling this week. We are doing a few special things – some in the field and some in how we compile the data collected in the field.
- 2) You will be given an 8-10 page “monitoring worksheet” which lists building addresses to be monitored in a pre-planned order. Turn-by-turn instructions are included on the worksheet so you should be able to follow it easily.
- 3) Your first task is to match the building listed on your worksheet with the building you are standing in front of. Some buildings have already been eliminated from this study – you should skip over these and continue to the next one listed on your worksheet. Note that a “building” can have more than one address, as in “71-73 Hampshire St”. A “building” can also be more than one building if they all put their trash and recycling out in the same spot – this part of Cambridge has a surprising number of houses tucked in behind others. And in some cases, a “building” can be less than one building, if it has its own address and sets out trash and recycling in a distinctly separate location. You should be guided by what is already on your worksheet since it is the result of earlier on-the-street monitoring – make a note in the margin if you think there may be a problem.
- 4) Determining the total number of recycling setouts for a building: generally, a “setout” is defined as any amount of recyclable paper (newspaper, magazines, junk mail, cardboard, etc.) and/or containers (glass bottles, metal cans, plastic, etc.) set out in a manner that it can be collected separately from the trash. It may be in a blue recycling container (Cambridge has several types) or it might just be set out in a paper bag or a cardboard box. Recyclable materials mixed in with trash, for example newspapers or bottles visible at/near the top of a trash barrel DO NOT count as a recycling setout.
 - a. If you do not see any sign of a distinct recycling setout at a given building, mark “0” in the Total Setouts column and move on to the next building on your worksheet. Be careful though – look all around the trash setout (the recycling might be hidden from one side) and on the other side of any tree that might be present (many people have a little habit of separating their recycling this way).
 - b. By definition, the number of recycling setouts cannot be more than the number of households in a “building” no matter how many blue recycling bins are there. If after examining the setout(s) carefully (see below) you are convinced that the number of setouts is equal to the number of households, mark that number in the Total Setouts column and move on to the next building on your worksheet
 - c. If there is a clearly single setout in front of a multi-unit building, follow these steps carefully. If the setout involves a blue recycling bin, check to see if it is marked in any way which indicates which apartment number it is from (for instance, “Unit 6”, or “Smith”, or “95 Hampshire #3”). Note this information in the column headed

“Units w/Marked Bins”. If the blue bin has no marking by which it can be identified, we are applying a sticker to help us identify it in future weeks of this study as a bin we have already counted. Take one of the stickers you have on your clipboard and apply it to the cleanest area you can find on either end of the blue bin (and fairly high up so it will be easier to see). If you applied a sticker, not that fact in the right-hand column on your worksheet. If you encounter one of our previously stickered bins, you should note its presence in the “Units w/Marked Bins” column with an “S” followed by the circled number on the sticker. Finally, if there is a single setout that does not involve a blue bin (most likely a bag of paper), indicated its presence in the “Non-Bin Setouts” column.

- d. Possibly the trickiest part of this monitoring is deciding exactly how many household setouts a clearly multi-unit setout really is. Bear in mind that this part is “an art not a science” and do the best you can according to these rules. You are looking for combinations of quantities of materials, different mixes of materials, how the materials are organized, and different degrees of cleanliness (or sometimes the notable lack thereof). For example, 2 bins – one with a limited amount of paper in it, the other with a limited quantity of containers in it – may very well represent a single household’s setout (they have 2 bins so they’re using them). On the other hand, 2 bins – each with some paper and some containers in them – might in this case really represent 2 household’s setouts (especially if the mix of materials is quite different, or if in one the containers are all carefully washed and in the other they are dirty). If some of the recyclables are separated from the others, odds are good that they represent a separate setout. Take your time, do the best you can (it gets easier the more you look at) and if you are uncertain between 2 possible setout numbers, go with the LOWER of the two. Place that number in the Total Setouts column, then do any of the steps regarding marked bins, non-bin setouts, and stickering of bins that are relevant.
 - e. If the setouts at a particular building are really confusing, mark down your best guesses in the relevant columns and indicate in the margin that this was a problem address. If we have time later in the morning, we may try to circle back and take another look.
- 5) Keep on going until you reach the end of your worksheet, then return to the DPW building at 147 Hampshire Street. Your route may take anywhere from 2 to 4 hours to do, depending on its exact size, how many weeks it has already been monitored, and the particular speed with which you do the route. Remember, we don’t want you to rush – the only exception being if you see the recycling truck catching up to you. You will be joined by Rick Innes and/or other members of the monitoring team at the DPW (or possibly near the end of your route). There are restrooms in the lobby of the DPW building (just tell the receptionist you are working on the recycling survey).
 - 6) The hard part is over, but you’re not quite done! Rick Innes will review your worksheet with you to make sure that everything you wrote down is understood. We are also interested in your thoughts on how the work procedures could be improved.